

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

BECKLEY DIVISION

ANTHONY KEVIN FIELDS,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
v.)	Civil Action No. 5:15-16576
)	
JOE COAKLEY, et al.,)	
)	
Defendants.)	

PROPOSED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

On December 30, 2015, Plaintiff, acting *pro se* and formerly incarcerated at FCI Beckley, filed his Complaint in this matter for alleged violations of his constitutional and civil rights pursuant to Bivens v. Six Unknown Federal Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 24 L.Ed.2d 619 (1971). (Document No. 1.) In his Complaint, Plaintiff names the following as defendants: (1) Joseph Coakley, Warden of FCI Beckley; (2) C. Bullock, Unit Head Manager; (3) C. Craddock, Case Manager; (4) Jeff James, SIS Technician; (5) Belly Medical; and (6) Ms. Thomas, Head of Medical. (*Id.*) Plaintiff alleges that Defendants have violated his constitutional rights by providing inadequate medical care and by improperly placing him in the Special Housing Unit. (*Id.*) Plaintiff, however, failed to submit an Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis* or pay the filing and administrative fee.

By Order entered on December 31, 2015, United States Magistrate Judge R. Clarke VanDervort ordered that Plaintiff “either pay the filing and administrative fee totaling \$400 or file an Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis* by February 1, 2016.” (Document No. 3.) Judge VanDervort further notified Plaintiff as follows:

Failure of the Plaintiff to either pay the filing and administrative fee or file an Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis* by February 1, 2016, will result in a

recommendation of dismissal of this matter without prejudice pursuant to Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules of Civil Procedure for the Southern District of West Virginia.

(Id.) By Order entered on January 6, 2016, the above case was referred to the undersigned for submission of proposed findings of fact and a recommendation for deposition pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B). (Document No. 4.)

On January 8, 2016, Plaintiff filed a Motion for Extension of Time to Pay Filing Fee (Document No. 5) and an Amended Complaint (Document No. 6). By Order entered on January 11, 2016, the undersigned granted Plaintiff's Motion for Extension of Time and directed Plaintiff to "either pay the filing and administrative fee totaling \$400 or file an Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis* by February 15, 2016." (Document No. 7.) Plaintiff has not responded to the Court's Order that was entered nearly seven months ago. Accordingly, the undersigned has determined that Plaintiff has failed to take any steps to prosecute this action, and therefore, Plaintiff's Complaint and Amended Complaint in this case should be dismissed.

ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules of Civil Procedure for the Southern District of West Virginia, District Courts possess the inherent power to dismiss an action for a *pro se* Plaintiff's failure to prosecute *sua sponte*.¹ See Link v. Wabash Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 629, 82 S.Ct. 1386, 1388, 8 L.Ed.2d 734 (1962).

¹ Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides:

(b) Involuntary Dismissal: Effect. If the plaintiff fails to prosecute or to comply with these rules or any order of court, a defendant may move to dismiss the action or any claim against it. Unless the dismissal order states otherwise, a dismissal under this subdivision (b) and any dismissal not under this rule - - except one for lack of jurisdiction, improper venue, or failure to join a party under Rule 19 - - operates as an adjudication on the merits.

Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules provides:

Dismissal of Actions. When it appears in any pending civil action that the principal issues have been adjudicated or have become moot, or that the parties have shown no interest in further prosecution, the judicial officer may give notice to all counsel and unrepresented parties that the action will be dismissed 30 days after the date of the notice unless good cause for its retention on the docket is shown. In the absence of good cause shown within that period of time, the judicial officer may dismiss the action. The clerk shall transmit a copy of any order of dismissal to all counsel and unrepresented parties. This rule does not modify or affect provisions for dismissal of actions under FR Civ P 41 or any other authority.

Although the propriety of a dismissal “depends on the particular circumstances of the case,” in determining whether to dismiss a case involuntarily for want of prosecution, the District Court should consider the following four factors:

- (i) the degree of personal responsibility of the plaintiff;
- (ii) the amount of prejudice caused the defendant,
- (iii) the existence of a history of deliberately proceeding in a dilatory fashion, and
- (iv) the existence of a sanction less drastic than dismissal.

Ballard v. Carlson, 882 F.2d 93, 95 (4th Cir. 1989). In consideration of the first factor, the Court finds that the delays in this case are attributable solely to Plaintiff as the Defendants have not been required to make an appearance in this action. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, federal courts may authorize the commencement of an inmate’s civil action *in forma pauperis* upon the inmate’s filing an Application to so proceed, together with an Affidavit stating the nature of the action and Plaintiff’s belief that he is entitled to redress. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(a)(1) and (2) (2002). “Section 1915 is intended to allow qualified litigants to proceed without having to advance the fees and costs associated with litigation.” DeBlasio v. Gilmore, 315 F.3d 396, 398 (4th Cir. 2003). Plaintiff has not responded to the Court’s Order directing him either to pay the requisite filing and administrative fee totaling \$400.00 or to file an Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis*. (Document Nos. 3 and 7.) Plaintiff, therefore, is the sole cause of the delays in this action. With respect to the second and third factors, the record is void of further evidence indicating that

Plaintiff has a history of “deliberately proceeding in a dilatory fashion” or that the Defendants have been prejudiced by the delays in this case.

In consideration of the fourth factor, the Court acknowledges that a dismissal under either Rule 41(b) or Local Rule 41.1 is a severe sanction against Plaintiff that should not be invoked lightly. The particular circumstances of this case, however, do not warrant a lesser sanction. An assessment of fines, costs, or damages against Plaintiff would be unjust in view of Plaintiff’s failure to pay the filing fee. Moreover, explicit warnings of dismissal would be ineffective in view of Plaintiff’s failure to respond to the undersigned’s Order entered nearly seven months ago advising Plaintiff that the undersigned would recommend dismissal if Plaintiff failed to complete and file the above forms (Document Nos. 3 and 7). In consideration of all factors, the undersigned concludes that dismissal for failure to prosecute is warranted. Accordingly, the undersigned recommends that this action be dismissed without prejudice unless Plaintiff is able to show good cause for his failure to prosecute.

PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing, it is therefore respectfully **PROPOSED** that the District Court confirm and accept the foregoing factual findings and legal conclusions and **RECOMMENDED** that the District Court **DISMISS** Plaintiff’s Complaint and Amended Complaint (Document Nos. 1 and 6) and remove this matter from the Court’s docket.

The Plaintiff is hereby notified that this “Proposed Findings and Recommendation” is hereby **FILED**, and a copy will be submitted to the Honorable United States District Judge Irene C. Berger. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code, Section 636(b)(1)(B), and Rule 6(d) and 72(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the Plaintiff shall have seventeen (17) days (fourteen days, filing of objections and three days, mailing/service) from the date of filing of this

Findings and Recommendation within which to file with the Clerk of this Court specific written objections identifying the portions of the Findings and Recommendation to which objection is made and the basis of such objection. Extension of this time period may be granted for good cause.

Failure to file written objections as set forth above shall constitute a waiver of *de novo* review by the District Court and a waiver of appellate review by the Circuit Court of Appeals. Snyder v. Ridenour, 889 F.2d 1363, 1366 (4th Cir. 1989); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 155 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841, 846 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91, 94 (4th Cir. 1984). Copies of such objections shall be served on opposing parties, District Judge Berger and this Magistrate Judge.

The Clerk is requested to send a copy of this Proposed Findings and Recommendation to Plaintiff, who is acting *pro se*, and transmit a copy to counsel of record.

Date: August 16, 2016.



Omar J. Aboulhosn
United States Magistrate Judge